Turkey Carpets and their Manufacture.

A SKETCH.

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WITH PHOTOGRAPHS.

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PHOTOGRAPHS.

Facing page 7.—Turkey Carpet Loom, Oushak.

„ 8.—Wool Comber, Oushak.

„ 16.—Carpet Caravan Preparing to Start.

„ 18.—Smyrna "Hamal" Carrying Bale for Shipment.

Introduction.

THE *following sketch of the Manufacture of Turkey Carpets has been sent to us by* MR. JOHN ROBERT G. GRIFFITT, *of Smyrna, a gentleman long acquainted with the manners, habits, and language of the people described, and who has lately added to his other means of imparting*

information the practice of Photography. This account has appeared to us so replete with interest that we have obtained his permission to publish it, feeling convinced that the readers will not fail to respond to our feelings.

A genuine Turkey Carpet (of course imitations exist) is by no means an uninteresting subject. It is one of the few manufactured articles whose designation is correct, whose origin is genuine, whose antiquity is beyond question, and which has maintained its hold on the public estimation for ages, undisturbed by the constant changes of fashion or demand for novelties. There must be excellence of some kind to account for the favour it has enjoyed, and the following pages will throw some light on the subject.

This little work will also dispel a misapprehension which we have found to exist. It is sometimes thought Turkey Carpets are made in England!

We have Axminster *Carpets*, Brussels *Carpets, and others, the names of which are now deceptive as regards the places of manufacture, and serve merely as distinctive titles. Why not the same thing in respect to Turkey and other Eastern Carpets?*

The readers of this sketch will at once see the fallacy of such a notion.

They will rest assured that a genuine Turkey Carpet has had its origin in Asia-Minor, has passed through the same processes of manufacture, has had the same journey on camel-

back to the shipping port, has had the same voyage to this country, in all a journey of about 3,000 miles, and is, in its possessor's hands, a unique specimen of an Art that has been practised in a similar way from very early ages.

Cardinal & Harford.

London, May, 1884.

Turkey Carpets and their Manufacture.

AMONG the few remaining industries of Asia-Minor the Manufacture of Carpets holds the first position on account of its present importance, and the means it has been of handing down old Oriental design almost unchanged through all the vicissitudes of many centuries. It has been supposed that early Phrygian art was introduced into Greece through the medium of Phrygian Carpets, and

Mr. W. M. Ramsay, in his recent explorations in Asia-Minor, has noticed a resemblance between the sculptured reliefs on the monuments of the Phrygian Kings and the patterns on Carpets still made in Phrygia.

Oushak, the largest and most important seat of the modern manufacture, has not yet been identified as the site of any ancient city, but is not distant from the Phrygian town of Acmonia, and is situated in the vilayet of Broussa, at a distance of about 150 miles E.N.E. of Smyrna, on the high road to Kara Hissar. The railway from Smyrna, winding along the banks of the Hermus, past the town of Magnesia, the residence of the earlier Sultans, and within hailing distance of the crumbling ruins of Sardis, terminates at Alashehr—the ancient Philadelphia. It is here the Carpet caravans deposit their loads from Oushak, which lies some seventy miles beyond, and can be reached in two days' journey from the railway terminus.

The wide table land on which Oushak is situated, at an elevation of over 3,000 feet above the sea level, is one of the richest wheat and valonea districts

of Turkey, and the undulating country in the vicinity of the town, with its cornfields, green even in July, and turf-clad hills, is in striking contrast with the parched-up appearance of the lowlands near the sea. Rich as it is by nature, Oushak has had its wealth enhanced by the industry of its inhabitants, and while most of the interior Turkish towns have been visibly declining, it is one of the few whose population has sensibly increased. It now contains about 3,200 Turkish and 300 Christian houses. Except the Mosques and a few public buildings the town is built of sun-dried bricks, some of the houses having a wooden superstructure. Repeated fires have destroyed several of the old quarters, which have been rebuilt on a slightly improved style with wider and straighter streets, but in most parts the usual characteristics of an Anatolian town are to be seen in narrow tortuous streets, overhanging balconies, screened windows, quaint public fountains, and the studied absence of anything approaching regularity. Houses, large or small, are huddled together as if space had been a rarity. Plaster is a luxury, paint unknown, and door locks seldom used. The street door generally opens into a courtyard,

from which a rude staircase leads to the upper storey, where one or two rooms are reserved for the reception of male visitors and serve as dining and sleeping rooms as well. A carpet on the floor and low divans running round the room are all the furniture, and the cupboards and recesses built in the surrounding walls contain the spare bedding which is brought out at night by the hosts themselves and spread on the floor for the use of their guests. Even in the height of summer a stout quilt is necessary. The silken sheets are stitched to this and serve apparently for many seasons without going to the wash, although the Turks generally are cleanly in their persons, and scrupulously so in their cookery. A Turkish dinner has too often been described to bear repetition, but the meals of an Oushaklee are notorious for their quantity. There are no gardens to the houses in the town; well-to-do people have a vineyard, an orchard, or a garden plot in the environs to which they repair once or twice a month to dine or carouse with their friends. It is these convivial entertainments that form the heaviest item in the expenditure of the Oushaklee who aspires to live above the

condition of a labourer; but there is no caste feeling among the Turks of the interior, and in their outdoor carousals, as at their dinners at home, all grades meet as on common ground.

The race is healthy and vigorous, and furnishes the Sultan with some of his finest troops; but Christian and Turk, so separated by religion, are undistinguishable except by a slight difference in dress, and are probably both more or less directly descended from the same stock—the old races of Asia-Minor. Though this is the case in the larger towns, there still remain the Turkman tribes which have retained the distinctive features of their race with their wandering habits, and persist in living in tents, notwithstanding the efforts of the Government to induce them to settle down in villages so as to make taxation easier. These tribes are as different in personal appearance from the town Turk as a Gipsy from a European, and it is a remarkable fact that the townspeople apply the word "Türk" to a Nomad as a term of reproach.

The Christians of Oushak, as in other Turkish places, occupy a separate quarter, and have their church, to which, some twenty years ago, they were allowed to add the luxury of a bell. The service is read in Greek, although few besides the ecclesiastics understand any language besides Turkish. They do not follow any agricultural pursuits, living solely by trade and the manufacture of Carpets without a pile, known as *Kilims*, and probably the same kind as were made at Sardis in ancient times.

These Oushak Kilims are made of any width and size required, and are regularly exported to Europe in small quantities. They differ from the many varieties of Kilims made by the Nomad tribes throughout Asia-Minor, as owing to the wandering life of these latter people they cannot be encumbered with a wide and heavy loom such as is required for a wide Kilim, and one rarely meets with any Kilims, other than those made at Oushak, wider than six feet.

A few Christian families have begun to weave the regular pile Carpets, but the bulk of these is still made by the Mohammedans.

There are now about seven hundred and fifty looms, all worked by private owners in the courtyards of their own houses. One loom to a house is the rule, but two and sometimes three are occasionally to be seen.

Walking through the shady streets of weavers' houses, with the sunlight here and there struggling in between the projecting eaves of the opposite roofs, one hears the constant thud, thud, thud, of the comb in busy hands, mingled from time to time with the chaunt of the younger weavers; but let the listener stop and rap at one of the doors and he will hear a scampering of feet and other shuffling noises indicative of a general stampede of workers from the gaze of a possible intruder. If the stranger be accompanied by the master of the house the girls and women will soon emerge from their various

hiding places, and, with a coquettish pretence at veiling, resume their occupation. A visitor for the first time is expected to pay the penalty of initiation, and will find his exit sometimes barred and baksheesh levied by the older hands.

The looms are sheltered from the rain by an earthen roof, or the projecting balcony of the upper storey, in other respects they are exposed to the air, although the cold in winter is intense, and the weavers are often driven to the necessity of keeping small pans of lighted charcoal on their laps to warm their fingers at intervals during their work.

The weavers are all women and girls. The mistress of the house superintends the work of her daughters or hired journey-women and apprentices. The looms are roughly fashioned of wood. A vertical or slightly inclined frame supports two horizontal rollers about five feet apart ; the warp, divided

into two sets of strands by leashes fastened to a horizontal pole, is wound round the upper roller and the ends secured to the lower one from which the work is begun, and on which the Carpet is rolled in the process of manufacture. The weavers kneel or sit cross-legged to their work, side by side, each taking about two feet of Carpet width. The tufts that form the pile and pattern are tied to the warp in rows, and the woof is passed with the hand after every row without the help of a shuttle; the pile and woof being then driven together with a heavy wooden comb, and the tufts clipped smooth with shears of native make. Above the weavers are suspended the bobbins of coloured yarn from which the pile tufts are cut. Forty-four rows of pile are considered an average day's work, for which an ordinary weaver gets about 4d. or 5d. a day. New patterns which have occasionally been introduced have never struck root, while the old ones, which probably date from the remotest antiquity, are still in favour. These old patterns are deftly worked from memory, but new designs have to be copied from a model, and much time is lost in counting the points.

The best weavers are almost always engaged with orders for the regular Oushak merchants, whilst those less experienced and unable to turn out such good work have to put up with chance wants, and sell their Carpets to small dealers, these goods being eventually shipped to Alexandria and other ports on the Southern and Eastern shores of the Mediterranean, although many find their way to London and Paris.

The warp and woof, as well as pile, are entirely made of wool, which is that of the fat-tailed breed of sheep, and a stock of wool is procured in the spring months from the Turkman tribes in the district between Oushak and Koniah, a country still known to the wool merchants as *Roum*—the old Seljuk kingdom of that name.

The wool is washed by men in the neighbouring stream, and combed and spun by women ; there is however no such thing as a factory in the European sense of the word for any stage of the Carpet manufacture.

Spinning is carried on by old or elderly women at odd moments when not occupied with their household duties. The yarn is loosely spun so as to allow the fibres to mix slightly together in the pattern, and present a blended appearance so different from the harshness inseparable from machine-made Carpets. The Yarn Market is held on Thursdays, from dawn till sunrise, at the Bazaar, which is then crowded with buyers and sellers, bullock carts, camels, and huge piles of creamy skeins.

Dyeing is another important branch of the manufacture. It is no longer performed by the weavers themselves, as in former times, but carried on by a separate class of men. Since the revival of the old style of colouring, the dyers have been compelled, in a great measure, to return to the use of the old vegetable dyes that had been abandoned. Madder roots for the reds, yellow berries for the yellows and greens, and valonea for creams and browns, grow in the neighbouring country ; cochineal has lost some of its importance, but indigo is and has always been imported.

Carpets for transportation to Smyrna are packed in bales weighing about 280 lbs., wrapped in goat's hair coverings, and carried by camels to the railway at Alashehr. Caravans accomplish the distance in five or six days, their pace seldom exceeding two-and-a-half miles an hour. The road is a mere track worn in the rock or the loose volcanic soil, and lies partly within the Catacecaumene region, famous of old for its wine, and the legendary scene of the combat between the Gods and Typhon. It debouches into the plain of Alashehr, some five hours' distance from that town, fords the Kouroo Tchay, a tributary of the Hermus, and skirts the slopes of the granite-crested Tmolus range that separates the Hermus valley from that of the Cayster.

The caravans camp at night in the open, and generally select a slope for their encampment. The *devejees* or camel drivers find shelter in their tents, but camels and goods are exposed to the weather. Large Carpets that may be too heavy to go in one bale are folded "saddle bag" fashion and slung across a camel ; reserve beasts being sometimes taken when extra heavy loads

have to be conveyed. In Smyrna the Carpets are swept and repacked in bales weighing five or six hundred pounds, which a porter carries with comparative ease.

The Smyrna *hamals* or porters are as remarkable for their carrying powers as for their sobriety and honesty, and have most of the wealth of the commercial quarters entrusted to their care. They are drawn from the villages in the vicinity of Koniah, whither they return to join their families every three or four years, and remain as long as their Smyrna savings last, until driven again by want to the sea-port for another round of patient labour.

The contrast between Oushak and Smyrna, sharp though it be, is not more so than that between Smyrna of the present day, with its railways and tramways, its handsome quay and spacious port crowded with steamers, and the city of fifty years ago, with its sea line broken by a fringe of coffee houses overhanging the sea, its wooden houses, dark streets, and the fleets of sailing

craft anchored in the bay waiting to be convoyed over the pirate-infested waters of the Greek Archipelago.

Although the term "Turkey Carpet" is applied in England exclusively to the productions of Oushak, there are somewhat similar manufactures carried on in two other towns of Asia-Minor. Ghiordes, and then Koula, each with a population of twelve thousand, come after Oushak in importance as Carpet manufacturing towns; both are situated within a radius of 150 miles from Smyrna. The implements and process of manufacture are the same as at Oushak, but the texture of Ghiordes is closer, and of Koula looser, than that of Oushak Carpets. Since the old dyes and patterns have been revived, the Ghiordes Carpet manufacture has greatly extended, and but few looms are now idle. For many years before the revival, the trade with Europe had been unimportant, and the comparatively small outturn was calculated to meet native requirements. The colouring of these Carpets used to be extremely bright, and adapted to suit the taste of the late Sultan,

who for many years gave large and continuous orders for furnishing his many palaces, and for presentation to the Holy places of Arabia. Besides the loom productions of these three towns, prayer rugs are made in the tents of the Nomad tribes for their own use, and in the villages and hamlets in several other parts of Asia-Minor.

The exportation of Carpets has now become a regular and important branch of trade, and they undoubtedly have been for many centuries exported to England. In Dean Milman's *Annals of St. Paul's Cathedral*, in an account of the spoliation of the treasures of the Church in 1552-3, the following is given :—

"There is something very sad in the humble petition of the Dean and Chapter, accompanying an inventory to be surrendered to the King's officers, that they might be permitted to retain a few necessary articles for the Divine Service," and amongst these "a Turkey Carpet for the Communion Table"

is named, and it is pleasant to learn that the present authorities continue the use of these Eastern Carpets in the Sanctuaries of this grand Metropolitan Cathedral.

To a small extent, these Carpets must have been exported from the Greek colonial cities since the dawn of History.

"*Thus as he spoke he led them in, and placed*
On couches spread with purple carpets o'er."

HOMER'S *Iliad*, book 9—235.
Lord Derby's Translation.

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